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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR SUPPORTS RESOLUTION 1701 IN ARMENIAN MEDIA

REF: YEREVAN 01108

¶1. On August 14, the Ambassador gave an interview to Armenian Public TV to explain UN Security Council Resolution 1701 on Lebanon.

The interview was aired without commentary on Public TV's evening news, the most-watched news programs in the country. During the interview, Ambassador Evans emphasized the need to establish a lasting peace, stating, "It was clear that nobody wanted to have a cheap and easy ceasefire that would lead to an outbreak of similar hostilities again. So what has happened as a result of the last few weeks of diplomacy is that all the major players--the Israelis, the Lebanese, and the outside powers--have worked together to fashion Resolution 1701." The Ambassador stressed the United States' commitment to helping the people of Lebanon and Israel, noting that Secretary Rice has announced that the United States will increase

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aid to Lebanon to 50 million USD.

¶2. The Ambassador also released an op-ed on the situation in Lebanon, the text of which was drawn from the Echo Chamber points. The op-ed was published on August 15 in "Hayastani Hanrapetutun," a government-owned newspaper that is widely read by government officials and opinion makers. In the op-ed, which was entitled "Helping Lebanon Regain Control," the Ambassador mourns the loss of civilian life but states that he believes Resolution 1701 opens a path towards establishing a lasting peace. The Ambassador emphasized the need to change the circumstances that led to the conflict, stating, "From the start, the United States and leaders in both Lebanon and Israel have said we could not return to the situation that allowed Hezbollah to provoke this crisis. A durable ceasefire requires changed circumstances so that the government of Lebanon, not a terrorist organization, controls the territory of Lebanon."

COMMENT

¶3. Whereas the Armenian media generally do not focus on international news, preferring instead to report on Armenia-specific events, the situation in Lebanon has received broad coverage due to the large number of Armenians living in Lebanon and the close ties of Armenians with the Diaspora community there. Media reports have generally focused on condemning the loss of life and destruction in Lebanon, sometimes blaming Israel or the international community for not ending the conflict more quickly. Through his media activities, the Ambassador has emphasized that the United States is committed to helping the people of Lebanon, and has expressed the U.S. view that a durable and lasting peace needs to be established.

EVANS